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THE GIFT OF
VICTOR EMANUEL
OF THE CLASS OF 1919





HUMAN FATE,

AND

AN ADDRESS
TO THE
POETS WORDSWORTH & SOUTHEY:

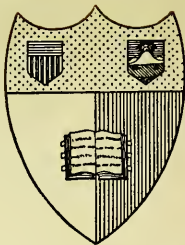
POEMS.

BY THE LATE

Sir Egerton Brydges, Bart.

*Now First Printed (Verbatim) from the Author's MSS.,
in the Possession of Charles Clark.*

1845



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THE GIFT OF
VICTOR EMANUEL
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1925



1 "Humble and", dated 1845
1845

IV. William Wordsworth,
a sonnet copied from
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p. 17.

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An Address

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Human Fate.



*HE, whose good fate has plac'd him in the lap
 Of competence and ease, may look with scorn
 And pity mingled with severe reproach
 On him, who struggles with the waves and winds.
 All seems to him a strait and lucid path. 5
 He shrugs his shoulders, and in accents smooth
 He gives advice: and then with voice oracular
 Tells us that trouble is the lot of man.
 He has no trouble but of dull ennui!
 He, who denies the facts which every day 10
 Obtrude themselves upon his eyes and ears,
 In blind obedience to a doctrine false,
 Prattles the nonsense, which revolts his heart:
 Mankind are not alike to happiness
 Or evil born! Some in the cradle lie, 15
 Ere conscience operates, in pain and sickness
 Surrounded by discordant tones and curses,
 And destin'd to temptation, and to wrong!
 Others upon the bed of Fortune thrown,
 With goodness round them, health, and smiling pleasure, 20
 Have nothing to withdraw them from the paths
 Of rectitude and wisdom, or benign
 Sympathies for the pangs of fellow beings!
 He, who from earliest childhood has alone
 Been conversant with want, oppression, artifice; 25
 Who not the lessons of the sage and virtuous
 Has learn'd; but cries of ravenous hunger, thirst,
 And pinching cold, and "comfortless despair,"
 Must steel his heart, unless a mighty spirit
 Of fortitude heroic, and sublimity, 30
 Inform, direct, enlighten human frailty!
 †Happiness cannot without knowledge be;
 But knowledge only is not happiness!
 To know and not to follow is a curse
 Where keen regret cankers all genuine pleasure. 35
 So knowledge draws the veil from those delusions
 Which may the seeds of future woe conceal—
 But knowledge is not in the power of all.
 Who works for daily bread by bodily sweat
 Can only by some rare exertion gain it 40

* Saturday, 12th November, 1831. † Sunday, 13th November.

When rarest genius guides his mighty efforts.
 So BURNS acquir'd it! And the obstacles
 Of poverty and humble labour conquer'd,
 So shines he in resplendent glory high!

From ignorance, from narrow selfishness, 45
 Which is but ignorance, all wickedness,
 Springs;—we believe that joy is, where it is not;
 The robber steals to t'enjoy, or to avoid
 The pangs of famine, but the gain possesses
 No zest. If leisure, discipline, and conscience 50
 Reigning o'er native faculties of mind
 Alone can gain instruction—strict wisdom,
 How sparingly are those rich blessings given!

The native feelings of the heart by long
 And most severe controul may turn from bad 55
 To good: but when does human frailty give
 Examples of such painful self-denial?
 An outward cover to the vicious movement
 Of a Satanic bosom may be worn
 But all within too probably impels 60
 Its course along the channels nature prompted!
 Then who shall say, that equal happiness
 Is spread within the reach of all mankind?
 Of some the destiny is solitude,
 Obscurity, neglect, and hard privation, 65
 Or leisure dull in dull scenes and dull climes.
 But all the various shapes of human misery
 Where effort cannot Fate's decree surmount
 Who shall describe? Virtue is not th' attainment
 Of a fix'd point; but length of distance gone 70
 From whence it starts. Among the first of virtues
 Is to learn wisdom, and detect the mingled
 Colours of light and shade in moral truths.
 Acutely and profoundly to consider
 Our intellectual and our moral duties 75
 And study to pursue what mental conscience
 After long meditation dictates to us.

But ah! how few can from their own resources
 Conclusions draw, or into order throw
 The thoughts that mistily upon the mind 80
 Obtrude themselves! They come and go as quick
 E'en as they come, and leave no trace behind!
 But he, who first digests, and brings the fruit
 To ripe maturity, and then preserves it
 In language clear and durable, performs 85
 A task becoming intellectual worth!
 There ever is disquiet in the mind

That nothing does:—it feels a painful torpor
 And with itself is peevish and dissatisfied.
 We live but lightly, on the types of memory, 90
 Which to the bosom's deep recesses come not!
 We prattle of them, but no active faith
 Have we: as toys we take them and reject!
 That which is drawn from inmost meditation
 Upon the elements of sage observance 95
 Mingles with all the veins of our existence
 We give our full belief, and have conviction
 In heart, in fancy, conscience, as in head!

All but the few, whom gifts of Providence
 With mental powers of strength original 100
 Have favour'd, keep their course like silly sheep
 Following their leader with blind confidence
 Their theoretic lessons for sole ornament
 They take, and act as those around them act.
 Wantonly to repeat betrays a bosom 105
 Of levity;—but to repeat designedly
 To delude others with pretence of goodness,
 Is the deep hopeless crime of curs'd hypocrisy.

Rightly to apprehend the mysteries
 Of earth, and its most polish'd human habitants 110
 Exalts the faculties of enjoyment in us;
 But with it comes the keen and dire perception
 Of wrongs and follies, which the heart embitters,
 Then morbidness surmounts the pure delight
 Of senses open to creation's charms. 115
 The spells that play upon the surface, better
 Perchance may frail humanity befit!
 Without reflection, or comparison
 They take what offers to th' untroubled mirror
 Of their slight intellects; no poignant thoughts 120
 Of past or future intervene to throw
 Clouds on the gentle sunshine of the moment.
 The sting of recollection is not theirs;
 Nor terror of the storm that in repose
 Lies hush'd; full gather'd in the distant sky. 125
 Thus then, may seem, equality is brought,
 And counterbalances for nature's treasures.
 Darkly we see, and e'en the wisest see
 We know not why we are so fearfully
 Made, and so contradictory in nature. 130
 Misfortune oft upon the heels attends
 Of Virtue and grand qualities of mind,
 And never quits them! It may be defect
 Of worldly cunning, and the serpent's wisdom.

To semble and dissemble, is the art 135
 To be successful in this life of falsehood!
 And politicians play a game of trickery
 In private paths, as in affairs of state!
 Who are the rich? and how gain they their treasures?
 How rare is new-got wealth with honesty 140
 Acquir'd! The gambles of the Stock-Exchange;
 Its lies habitual and incessant; frauds
 Of foulness horrible, and unsuspected,
 Extortion from the blood of famish'd faith;
 Plunder of public funds, and perjury, 145
 And murder of the innocent;—too oft
 Whole tribes and nations! and then daily pilfer
 By little and by little in all dealings;
 And Jewish interest, and cruel loans
 Of mean deception to necessity! 150
 Such is too oft the source of new-got riches!
 Were Riches but the power to benefit
 Our suffering fellow-beings,—wipe the tear
 From misery and want, and lift the good
 And highly-gifted with the ornaments 155
 And strength of native talent, or great hearts,
 Then by all virtuous means, at least, we might
 Desire it, and put forth our efforts for it:
 But e'en when honestly inherited,
 Or gain'd by virtuous means, how rarely is it 160
 Dispens'd for good, or innocently us'd!
 How oft it pampers indolence, that generates
 Ennui, and feebleness, and rank disease!
 And then the mind and heart deteriorate,
 And lose the intellectual rank of man! 165

A sensual course of wearisome existence
 Riches may give; and as a cypher man
 May pass along to a forgotten grave,
 But in an honourable fame alone
 Is consciousness of pure and deep-felt joy. 170
 How many painful labours, perils, torments,
 Privations, insults, calumnies, diseases,
 Does it outweigh! When cold neglect, and rude
 Reproach hang over us to blight and paralyse
 Our steps, a beam wakes in us, and dispels 175
 The trembling chill, and backward drives the arrow.
 When we alone in the dark desert pick
 Our way, the distant gleam comes glowing:
 Gradual, then blazes on our thorny path,
 And right before our feet a certain guide 180
 Of joy to temples mounted in the air
 Of splendor, and ærial notes, becomes!

Read but the tale of Genius; infelicity
 Through the chief tenor of the outward life
 Attends it; such was Dante, Tasso, Milton, 185
 Otway, and Collins, Burns, and gentle Bloomfield!
 And magic Chatterton! We know their miseries;
 We know not the intensity of their raptures!
 But the rapt spirit, which has suffer'd here
 From senses too refin'd for human concourse, 190
 Assuredly will in an higher sphere
 Enjoy its recompence—Eternity
 Seems here in matter, not in mind: the river
 Rolls, as it roll'd thousands of years ago!
 And mountains lift their heads, and forests wave 195
 And shade and whisper, and to tempests echo,
 The same: but numberless successive races
 Of human beings start, live, turn to dust,
 Nor leave a visible atom of existence!
 Where are the countless millions of the spirits 200
 That once inform'd an earthy shape—departed?
 Have they by transmigration more than once
 Pass'd through the trial of this frame of clay?
 Whence came each Spirit? from what other world?
 Who shall conjecture? Some there are, who seem 205
 To bring with them the tints of other worlds,
 And throw them on this globe's more rude creation.
 Indignantly they thus, perchance, consort
 With beings of a less ethereal rank,
 And to some temporary destiny 210
 Of essence more degraded are condemn'd.
 And then their finer texture ill can suffer
 The weight of atmosphere for mortals fitted:
 But sink by torture, or by slow decay,
 And gladly from a world they hate escape, 215
 Ere half the days of man's allotted space!

Oh! eloquent and sensitive young Bard,
 Painter of Clifton's Grove, who though of birth
 Seemingly humble, and by occupations
 Parental that the heart make hard surrounded, 220
 Yet melted with all tenderness, and music,
 As harps before the breeze that whisper love!
 Thou wert some Spirit sent from seats of bliss,
 Where all the Muses sing symphonious airs.
 For what mysterious cause we dare not guess, 225
 But short thy trial was, and to congenial
 Climes in the skies wert thou transported soon:
 The turf lies light upon thine earthly relics,
 And tears bedew them ever; and sweet flowers
 Spring up; and nightly notes of harmony 230

Aërial over them, and round about,
 Sound, as if magic on the spot was playing!
 * Many there are who think that accident
 Opens the fountain wheels alike to all
 Common—produces inward the same waters, 235
 But only to a few are these same waters
 Of purity and holy spirit given!
 We lead a life of lost and anxious care
 Honours to win, which some pronounce a breath,
 An empty bubble! and which, after all, 240
 As Falstaff says, Detraction clouds and covers!
 But when the swelling treasures of the soul
 Are full, they, like the smouldering flame, will find
 A vent, and out! The images that play
 Upon the mirror of the mind, will pierce 245
 And burst the veil, and strive to show their shapes,
 And tints of bright magnificence and beauty
 Before a wondering world! But if they were
 The mirrors which reflected only forms
 External, much of value they would lose. 250
 By some mysterious power they represent
 Forms of their own creation, or inspir'd
 By visions, as it seems, of other worlds!
 The spectacles this earthly scene of things
 Exhibits are sublime; but much they have not, 255
 In their material essence, which the mind
 Of Genius gives them! It is magical,
 The spell that wakes such wonders! As a dream
 Is all the beauty that the Bard brings forth!
 Thus speaks he better of the past than present, 260
 Because the cold and calculating eye
 Pretends not to detect him by the absence
 Of those invisible images he draws!
 Thus Memory mingles up the actual,
 Impress'd upon the brain from outward shapes, 265
 With the creations woven in the loom
 That works within: and thus to the poet
 All past life is but as a shadowy vision,
 That which when present was but dull and hard,
 Or painful, is converted in the retrospect 270
 To bright, soft, mellow tints of exquisite
 Grandeur or gentleness, and fond attraction!

 There is excess of misery in the world,
 But there is also rapture, and sublimity,
 And minglement of pleasure, both material 275
 And spiritual, which defies all words!

But Heaven's surrounding air must be as bland,
 And soft, and glowing, as the vernal sun
 Breaking through gold-ting'd clouds. The habitant
 Of low, dank, marshy plains, in atmospheres
 Heavy, oppressive, colourless, unchangeable, 280
 Feels his soul frozen, and without emotion!
 Pent in this mould of earth, we are not free
 From its effects on the immortal soul!
 Beneath dull skies dull labour may pursue
 Its useful course of body, or of intellect, 285
 But weak and cloudy will the gleams of spirit,
 And humble be! O! for Italian skies
 To ripen the rich products of the mind!

Providence, in its goodness, has ordain'd
 That humble talents should be fit to work 290
 The common business of mankind's affairs;
 While Genius, like a fine-edg'd instrument,
 Is blunted by encount'ring hard materials.
 The task is others' deep to penetrate
 To distant motives—principles extract— 295
 Take a wide range beyond the circumstances
 That press upon particular interests,
 And to devise, and resolutions form
 For general, not mean individual good!
 Here Genius only can supply the requisite 300
 Power, light, acuteness, and profundity.

The mighty insight of the exploring mind
 Throws rays that shine for ever!—not before
 Touch'd, and not touch'd again,—though it were easy
 To follow, where the path had once been open'd! 305
 Thus Daniell, moral poet, of intense,
 Most subtle, and most searching, and original
 Thought; yet of language clear—harmonious,
 Bright and elastic, strikes a thousand lights
 By the collisions of his vigorous mind! 310
 A plaintive melancholy sentiment
 Of human frailties mellows all the strains,
 And thrills the tender bosom with a virtuous
 And lovely sympathy! Oh! what a lesson
 Of intellectual wisdom—to be studied 315
 With close abstraction of sharp faculties,
 Are those wrought emanations of intensity!
 There will be met nice truths elicited,
 Not elsewhere found! and evanescent tints
 Of moral lights and shades, no other hand 320
 Has ever trac'd, or had perception of,
 If they had died with him! What head so dull



Among the children of the Muse, to be
 Insensible how much had Intellect
 Lost of its gems! Oh! name of worth, yet now 325
 But little noticed, and still less regarded,
 Yet well repaid for all neglect of others
 By that great living Critic, whose pure praise
 Is fame itself,—the virtuous, eloquent,
 And all-accomplish'd Laureate! Sleep, then, excellent 330
 And sagest Daniell, tranquil in thy tomb:
 Thy name in golden letters is inscrib'd,
 Which never more a cloud or stain will know!

But ever must the living Bard encounter
 The chills and blights which stupor, envy, malice, 335
 Intrigue, and rivalry, pour on his efforts!
 His zeal with them is but an eagerness
 To blow vain bubbles: they, forsooth, would have him
 Rest on his oars; and sleep, or play, or whistle,
 Seeking amusement which no labour costs, 340
 In lieu of toilsome products, nothing worth!

But what is meditated with profound
 Pondering of all the mind's most chosen strength,
 Were all committed to the fading marks
 Of treacherous memory, in foolish faith, 345
 That if it vanishes 'twill come again!
 Bursts of the mind there are which come but once,
 And if not noted then, are lost for ever!
 Deluder vain! who thinks that what he once
 Has known, in future he shall ever know! 350
 Sometimes by accidental processes
 The brain arrives at truths that ne'er again
 Will shine upon it! In an happier mood,
 The hope of novelty has led him on,
 And never will that impulse strong return! 355
 There is a train which, when the light is caught,
 By its own course proceeds: arrest its course—
 Cut short the blaze, and all is dark for ever!
 Thus in the misty twilight of the brain,
 As if in love with darkness, man consumes 360
 His precious days, and to the dust descend
 His mouldering relics, black Oblivion's prey.

Is there in discipline of Intellect
 Aught that can save us from the woes of life?
 No! but full much there is that greatly heightens 365
 Life's noblest pleasures! Cruel, false philosopher,
 That would'st attempt to cavil, and to argue
 Those charms away! for what imagination



By magic spell creates, is best reality!
 Most bright—most unalloy'd by earthly evil! 370
 —Oh! talk not of delusive tints of error;
 Talk not of mischievous and quagmire lights!
 Truth in Imagination's golden vests
 With most enchantment shines! The poet's pen
 Embodies them, that, like the rainbow's hues 375
 And shapes, dart forth, change, flit, and fade away!

But when we see the great ones of the world
 Ride over us in cars of burnish'd ore,
 Then does the Muse a shield afford, or covers us
 With mantles, proof 'gainst their insulting strains! 380
 Odious the arts by which the coarser talents
 Of bold ambition scale the heights of Fortune!
 'Tis confidence in self, and readiness,
 Perception quick—not thought original—
 Which works its progress thro' the thorns and barriers! 385
 He who can catch the lights which others generate,
 Bears all the palm away from the creator;
 It costs him nought but memory; all the toil
 Is done for him, and his fresh unspent vigour
 Is ready for the skilful application. 390
 In Statesmen—Legislators—Governors,
 How rarely has that sole great gift been found,
 That marks Invention's mighty faculty!
 For here alone the glory lies: all else
 A mind of mediocrity, by industry, 395
 Art, accident, and cunning disciplined,
 May reach, while working for the public good
 Plausibly,—for itself alone in heart
 And truth! But honours, station, riches, thus,
 And luxuries, and the base world's applause, 400
 Are gain'd, enjoy'd, heap'd, spent, forgot, dissolv'd.

Then what is birth? Does it exalt the soul,
 Give generous sentiments, heroic courage,
 And firm resolves? or does it lull to rest
 The energies of body and of mind? 405
 In animals, the character of blood
 Is ever valued: spirit, force, formation
 Of limbs, and nerves, and veins. In human nature,
 The qualities of head and heart, which Time
 Has seen descending through a long succession 410
 Of centuries, and bearing still the palm
 Amid the conflicts of society,
 Must still have something of inherent power
 To make them hold their place, and be preeminent.
 The origin of true nobility 415



Is buried in the night of Time; it takes
 Its fountain from the earliest restoration
 Of laws and civil order, when the reign
 Of Charlemagne the beautiful gradation
 Of feudal structure through his empire cast; 420
 Who cannot from this ancient stock of Princes
 Derive their streams of heritable blood,
 Have not pretension to strict ancestry
 Of noble stock! Thus rare the genuine brood
 Of noble vein in England! One or two 425
 Of Saxon Princes sprung, complexly mingled
 With Norman chieftains, but from Normandy
 The Carlovingian Peerage plac'd its feet,
 And spread its broad black pinions o'er the land,
 From Dover's heights to Wallia's mountain bounds. 430
 * There Chester's Earl his vast domains extended,
 And left by heiresses a long succession
 Of mighty feudal Peers. The blood is dwindled,
 And now diluted into puny races!
 But once there was a living vigour in it, 435
 That roll'd through centuries in pride and glory.

Now all is change, and no one knows his station,
 And institutions tremble to their base;
 Now dignity has lost its reverence,
 And none obey upon authority 440
 And reason, but by force; for every one
 Would make the law himself to regulate!
 Thus whom condition, birth, and destiny,
 Have made to be restrain'd, must be the rulers!
 Thus uproar soon will come, and anarchy, 445
 Plunder, and bloodshed: knowledge and the arts
 Will die, and one black ruin cover all!

If tyranny and hard oppression move
 The bosoms of the great, let bold revenge
 Strike, and to ashes tumble down abuse 450
 Of human power! but let not upstart insolence,
 From fretful and delusive self-opinion,
 And morbid discontent, attack the lawful
 And necessary bonds of Government!
 Laws operate more by usage than by force, 455
 And therefore novelty of enactment is
 An ill intrinsic of the wisest laws!

But not by laws alone a people live;
 Those gifts of nature, and those moral habits,
 Too nice for laws to regulate, inspire 460

Content and happiness, which rods of rulers
 Can nor bestow, controul, nor take away!
 Indolence, and her squalid progeny,
 Mean reckless Want, or daring thirst of plunder,
 Sprung from th' excitement of the elements, 465
 Too feeble are, or too unmalleable,
 By legislative wisdom to be chang'd!
 But individual genius knows not country,
 Government, climate, manners: 'tis in all
 Nearly the same! The Bard in every nation— 470
 In every age—of similar elements
 His song composes;—ever are the sympathies
 Of the heart's sensibilities the same!
 The force and processes of mind will vary—
 Never the heart! Beneath the savage rule 475
 Of cruel despots, and in war, and blood,
 Or penury, and cold, and hunger, thus
 Has the Muse struck the undecaying lyre!
 Thus Spencer's rich and prodigal invention
 Put forth his brilliant stores of fabulous tales, 480
 'Mid hordes barbarian raging round with fire
 And sword, and yells of fierce vindictive slaughter!
 Thus Sackville, when the scaffold and the stake
 Threaten'd all ranks, gave forth his Legend bold
 Of picturesque sublimity! And thus 485
 Chatterton sung, the cup of poison steaming
 E'en at his lips! He breath'd the notes of music
 To the last gasp, then clos'd his earthly sighs
 Within the soothing Muses' arms, and died!
 Rays from the stars descend to light the earth, 490
 And sometimes the frail human shape inhabit;
 Then tir'd, revolted, burst away again,
 And seek their native skies!

Upon this globe

To be cast destitute, devoid of food,
 Of raiment, and of roof, seems a strange fate 495
 For the all-bounteous rule of Providence!
 The fruits of earth would seem sufficient for
 The sustenance of human population,
 But by the toil of hands, and sweat of brow,
 It must be gain'd! And ere the harvest comes, 500
 Where are the funds the labour to sustain?
 The progeny of man reduplicates
 Upon the earth, and can alone by art
 And force of body generate its food.
 But slow it comes,—inadequate to meet 505
 Instant demand; and hence heart-torn dependence,
 And work at will of others, and the pay
 Of maintenance doled out. But hence the efforts

Of human ingenuity—of science—
 Imagination; all that touches the senses, 510
 And all the beating echoes of the bosom!
 Hence capitals of states, cities and towns,
 Live by contrivance—good and evil mix'd—
 Industry virtuous; fraud, and perfidy,
 And trick, and foul extortion,—wretches live 515
 In multitudes upon the very vitals
 Of fellow-beings. Half of boasted London,
 Dense in its numberless inhabitants,
 Lives, fattens, gorges on the other half!
 Day after day, its means precarious 520
 Of dearly-bought existence, by expedients
 Of crime and cunning, are with pain procur'd.
 Jews, jobbers, gamblers, thieves, and usurers,
 And hell-scap'd myrmidons of tortur'd law.
 Thus as society becomes complex, 525
 And laws and schemes of human cunning grow,
 Vice swells, and ramifies, and turns to poison,
 Disease, and misery, the ways of life.
 And thus Corruption grows and lifts her head
 Gigantic, and her thousand arms abroad, 530
 Till with foul blood she mortifies, and down
 At once she sinks into the pit of death.
 The havoc of her gangren'd body throws
 Its ruin far and wide, and pestilence
 Infests the skies, and fertile lands become 535
 Unpeopled deserts, where the rank remains
 Of former habitations breed infection,
 And human footsteps can no longer tread.

States have their rises and their falls; the height
 Attain'd, they rest not long upon that giddy summit, 540
 More rapidly descending than they rose again,—
 And, as they go, the horrible velocity
 Gains strength, and to the pit with thunder bounds,
 And, into atoms crush'd, awakes a noise,
 As if the elements had come together! 545
 So clouds o'er Europe gather, that predict
 A dread return of centuries of darkness;
 When all the sweet civilities of life
 Must cease, and rudeness, rapine, fall of temples,
 And palaces, and mansions, must lie spread 550
 In fragments on the desolated soil!
 Riches must cease, and poverty, without
 The aid of what it fed on, must grow poorer;
 And man, ferocious, lose the light of mind,
 And roam and grovel in the woods like brutes. 555

Learning and genius, like all mortal gifts,
 Tend, through man's frailty, ever to abuse.
 Knowledge wide-spread, to ill-digested brains,
 Becomes delusion; ill-plac'd confidence
 In self-opinion generates fumes and mists, 560
 Inebriates the patient, and before him
 Puts forth false rays which lead to snares and ruin.
 Wisdom the child of tranquil Leisure is,
 And humble Contemplation,—not of hasty
 Passion, and narrow prospect of surrounding 565
 Events, and pressing interests of a few!
 But ever will the multitude believe
 What flatters their own habits, and their tastes
 Pampers; and thus, authority set loose,
 Lets all things quickly dash themselves to chaos. 570
 Each his own bounded ken is taught to trust,
 And think that what a partial ill creates
 Repugnant is to heavenly dispensation.
 Thus pitiful conceit believes it can
 New-make creation in a better form; 575
 Authors must now to popular taste devote
 Their pliant wits for sordid lucre's sake,
 And higher minds, too weak to stem the tide
 Of democratic clamour, first surrender
 The guidance, then in mere despondence bend 580
 Their own elastic talents to the storm
 And thus an universal dissolution
 Of reason sound, and deep philosophy,
 Insinuates itself through every rank,
 And every nation! Wisdom rules no more, 585
 Nor Genius, nor sound learning;—plausible
 Pretensions of the people's rights, and clamorous
 Demands of universal distribution,
 Of equal franchises, and equal judgment,
 Equal respect to each's own opinion, 590
 And nothing yielded to the force and weight
 Of talents by experience, age, and labour;
 Lifted above the common lot of intellect,—
 These are the rulers of the times; precursors
 Of fearful overturns, and rude distraction! 595

But let not tyranny, and narrow thoughts
 Of partial favour, and vile privilege,
 Triumph at doctrines and remarks like these!
 There are abuses in old governments
 Which patience can no longer suffer! Faith 600
 In principles of optimists is folly,
 And mean subjection to such power is criminal;
 Idolatry of wealth or rank is vile—
 Pusillanimity of head and heart!

In upstart greatness, there's a ruling passion
To ride upon the backs of the companions
Whom once it knew in its debased state,
And insult, with unjust success, combines
To fix respect and awe by marks of power.
The tranquil conscience of hereditary
Title to seats of grave preeminence
Resorts not to excitement, or the tone
Of insolent authority, and threats.
But waters in commotion, when the mud
Is upward stirr'd, and what should float at top
Is sunk by the disturbance, spread disorder
Over the banks, throwing effluvia forth,
Whence dangerous maladies distain the air :
Oft, in the lapse of time, the chain that galls
Is left when the necessity has ceas'd.

Oh, bigotry, how hateful is thy reign!
Oh, prurient love of change, how full of ills
Untired, unseen, is thy presumptuous passion!
Rash blindness! fanciful belief in prospects,
Which only in the fancy's mirror shine! 625
To hope for better lights, and sound improvements,
But hope with caution, and long meditation;
And to suspect the seeming good which others
Of deeper wisdom in past ages miss'd.
* 'Tis pleaded that the course of public state, 630
If it goes ill, regards not private men!
But all the small concerns of private life
Ill legislation deeply trenches on.
Do wanton and unskilful taxes take
Nothing of comfort from pinch'd poverty? 635
Laws of miscall'd protection to the person,
And purse, but add a weapon to the strong,
And aggravate the weakness of the weak!
Is justice only to be had for gold?
Then he who most completely robs his victim 640
Acts with impunity, and is most secure!
Better no laws than such as these, too complex
For use of those who most a shield require.
Error, caprice, uncertainty is bad,
From instant judgment of frail, thoughtless men, 645
But chance of rectitude is also there;
And thus the humble, as the high, may find
Some hope, some possible relief and comfort.
Now villainy triumphant reigns, and fraud
Is furnish'd with the surest means to cover it. 650

When Courts are arguing knotty points of meaning,
 Consuming days and nights in useless subtleties,
 It nought avails to anxious litigants,—
 Neither can gain the prize—the ravenous lawyer
 Takes all! and thus the intricate web is wove, 655
 Victims to catch, and death is in its nets.

The wind blows fierce and cold, and hollow shrieks
 Ride on the night-storm! Down the swelling Rhone
 Come the careering blasts! A sable mantle
 Invests the skies, and loud the rage is heard, 660
 But nought is seen: rock'd in my bed I lie,
 And in the tumult fuller flows my Muse.
 The night is as the day to me,—no time
 Of my declining years for work I lose!
 The midnight hours speed quick while at my task, 665
 And in sleep's torpor little is consumed.

Perchance by perseverance, self-denial,
 And firm reliance on the mind's omnipotence,
 This clog of earthly clay may be cast off,
 And we may to pure intellect and spirit 670
 Convert ourselves, and live on air, and drink
 Etherial springs! and then the film will fall,
 And we celestial objects shall behold!
 Now human cares and sorrows, and the blight
 Of dire adversity, suppress our fires. 675
 The glow of human charity no more
 Shines on misfortune; black neglect, reproach,
 Calumny, insult, single or in groups,
 Assail their victim with conflicting weapons.
 How often to the grave I look for peace, 680
 Finding no mercy in the human heart!
 The prosperous may talk of smiles and joys,
 And sympathies, and friendships, and applauses;
 Only where they are useless are they lavish'd.
 Oh, wretched human fate! 'tis Vice that walks 685
 The world in worship, honour, pride, and smiles.
 Minds dull and ignorant, yet full of faith
 In their own petty faculties and knowledge,
 Assume the reins and rule the course of kingdoms.
 Then narrow and distorted measures come, 690
 Concession, where resistance bold is fit,
 And obstinate resistance, where to yield
 Alone can save a kingdom from convulsion:
 Thus foul corruption, when to purify
 Is the grand boast on which they place their claims! 695
 Genius, without intrigue, ne'er wins its way
 Up the steep, slippery scale of public station;
 Secret manœuvre, bribery, mutual pledge

Of wicked counter-payments, treacherous promises,
 Each to give up a victim-friend, or foe; 700
 Impregnable concealment of intention,
 Smiles where revenge is plotted, surly frowns
 Outwardly on the hooded tool of ill—
 The hidden agent of the frowner's mischief.
 Plain-dealing, steps direct, and open heart, 705
 Are caught at every pace by ambush'd Wrong!
 He who looks back upon the precipices
 He has escap'd, in working up his way
 To worldly honours, trembles at the sight,
 And would not pass again the same deep dangers 710
 For all that man and life's first prize can give.
 Care, restless watchfulness, and sting of conscience,
 And pining, pale, and palsy-struck regret;
 Suspicion, troubled sleep, and sickly thought,
 And dread of solitude, and daggers hung 715
 By slender threads over the beating brain.

But who can find the road to happiness
 In this mysterious globe, where Misery
 Rules paramount o'er ev'ry joy and blessing?
 Vice is successful, but not therefore happy; 720
 Virtue is wretched, for 'tis robb'd, tormented,
 Malign'd, and vultures live upon its blood:
 Genius can find no audience, and the mountebank
 Engrosses public favour—profit—praise.
 The people hear not aught that does not echo 725
 Their own opinions, feelings, arguments:
 If Genius is successful, 'tis by accident,
 And comes not from her merit, but her fate.

Is there an art by which we can escape
 From damps of hope, and chills of spiritual pleasure? 730
 By the hard world th' attempt is stigmatiz'd;
 'Tis call'd delusion, weakness, folly, crime.
 Still in the battle's front—the hope forlorn—
 Malice and envy ever place our lot!
 Angels in clouds descend, and Spirits walk 735
 In vest etherial cloath'd,—but these would pierce
 The veil, and all the bareness of mortality
 Expose. But who the shadows of delusion
 Would use, in momentary dreams to fly
 From danger and oppression, when the blow 740
 That pierces through the misty covering,
 Will heavier come at last? Oh! not more heavy,
 But soften'd by the magic of the mind,
 Whose genuine movements emanate from Truth.



* Each hour that we by virtuous means delay 745
 The misery that human fate imposes,
 Is a clear gain which wisdom sanctifies.
 The curse of Malice often on the good
 Hangs like a vulture, not to be shook off!
 But the good persecuted man holds on 750
 His course amid the tempest, sad at heart,
 Yet not in courage or in vigour quail'd.

Who bears a lamp along the darkling road,
 Which, though it keeps not perils from himself,
 Throws rays at distance which direct the world, 755
 Is a blest pole-star, whose benign appearance
 Shall live in memory when its light is set.
 Spirits are sent on earth for good to man
 Who for themselves incur incessant evil,
 And are by those pursued for whom they toil. 760
 They love the inward conscience of the worth
 By which they merit glory, when they lose it.
 Dark is their brow and suff'ring pale thin cheek,
 And Care her wrinkles deep upon it ploughs;
 Feebly the feet the body bears along, 765
 And every limb and nerve with sorrow trembles.
 But still they live, and though, without, all clouds
 And massy darkness, in the sanctuary
 Of the soul's temple burns the purest brightness.

The wind, that to repose had hush'd itself, 770
 Again begins to mutter. Arno's white wave
 And Rhone's blue tumbling billow greet each other
 Across the istmus, as they near approach
 Into each others' arms to throw themselves!
 Blasts, lightly shrieking, ride again upon 775
 The ruffled summits of their surfaces;
 And cars with rumbling wheels seem rapidly
 To roll upon them. Tones of th' elements
 Are to the poet music rapturous:
 In the still midnight ever Nature's sounds 780
 Speak as oracular voices,—then the Muse
 Within her glowing arms embraces us,
 And we lie bath'd in bliss most exquisite.
 Then only her dear sister, Contemplation,
 Sits by our sides, and consecrates our slumbers. 785
 Encircled in the hooded veil, she whispers
 Lullabies; and the spirit from deep slumbers
 Hears, and is sooth'd the more, and sleeps again!
 Who are th' interpreters of airy visions
 Like these? The dreamer is too lost in rapture, 790

And all the notes are airy and inaudible
 To others, and the shapes are light and fitting.
 But sometimes when the dream has pass'd away,
 The memory still retains it on the fancy;—
 Thus fancy renovates what rich creation
 795
 Invents; for fancy merely is a mirror,
 And has no faculty which recombines.

Let dust to dust return, and take the fate
 Of its materials of mortality:
 The soul within has died from its corruption. 800
 If man to crawl with worms is well content,
 And live upon the foulness of the earth,
 The fate of earth he must endure, and never
 Ascend the skies! and then his brother worm
 Will eat the lifeless carcase, and no Spirit 805
 Hover to call back the ethereal particle!
 Milton has said, that man imbrutes by sensual
 Sin; and the joy of mere material pleasure
 Is full of disappointment and regret.
 Satan rules o'er the world, and in the shape 810
 Of the sly serpent ever tempts to ill:
 Disguise, and treachery, and hypocrisy,
 Are the chief crimes that desolate the world,—
 Then fraud, extortion, plunder. Purge foul London
 Of nineteen-twentieths of its habitants, 815
 And there will be enough to govern well!
 But multitudes conceal the hell-like practices
 Of rapine, theft, and juggle, blood, and torture.
 How live the crowds that round the carrion flock
 Of the vile Public Funds? By daily lies, 820
 For fraud and robbery alone invented!
 There solitude, amid innumerable
 And dense collections of unknown and nameless
 Masses of men, o'ercomes the drooping spirit,
 And, with a fearful dread of rude oppression, 825
 Makes the heart sink itself to mean abasement.
 How different is the solitude of woods,
 And vallies, and green meadows, and soft rills!
 There tranquil self-complacence may revive,
 And fond Imagination may conform, 830
 All which surrounds it to its own delight.
 There native love and purity of bosom
 Has leisure to be good, and to dispense
 Light from the rays within upon the scene,
 When the wind breathes the music of the skies. 835
 Here only can the Muse her heavenly fire
 Nurse, and the mind forget its earthly bonds,
 And spiritual Virtue spread her glittering wings!

There is no joy but in deep solitude,—
 When by the world to be forgotten, little 840
 Imports us if we that base world forget!
 Give me but books and a smooth-running pen,
 And bread and water and a roof of straw
 Suffice for me upon the lonely mountain, 845
 Where I may see the blessed sun arise
 And set again, and from a trackless distance
 See towers and cities glitter, but not hear
 The sounds discordant of their clamorous strifes!
 I would that I had thus a life whose troubles 850
 Have darken'd every moment pass'd away;
 I was not fitted for the frays of man,
 Contending ever with his jealous neighbour.

* But I must end this fitful song, or come,
 At least, to a pause; and how can I have strength 855
 To raise my voice, or drive the current on?
 Woes cluster on my hoary head anew,
 And I am call'd this head to prostrate low,
 E'en to the wildest fury of the storm:
 It seems a crime to listen to the Muse, 860
 And by her magic voice to lull my torments!
 But still I throw me in her shielding arms,
 And in her voice's sweet forgetfulness
 Am sooth'd again by night to airy dreams.
 The day too troublous is, and mortal noises 865
 Drown all the notes of her seraphic tongue;
 But midnight stillness tempts her forth again,
 And on the solemn murmur of the breeze
 Her heavenly strain comes floating,—then again
 Of empyrean air I draw the freshness, 870
 And cast away the load of human sorrow.

Thou whom these melancholy strains displease,
 Avert thy world-besotted ears, and spit
 The hateful scorn of thy obdurate heart:
 If thou art fond of gorgeous imagery, 875
 Or fairy fiction, here thou wilt not find it.
 The texture of the web is grave and moral,
 Scorning all ornament; the lessons stern,
 But not the less by sweet emotions soften'd
 Of sympathy for man's afflicted fate.† 880

* Friday, 18th November. † 20 minutes before 1, A.M.



TO W. W. and R. S.

(*William Wordsworth and Robert Southey.*)

◆

* BARDS of immortal fame, in virtue high
As in bright genius! In a noble heart
Lies worth, above all genius and all power!
All that by labour can be done is nought,—
And all by skill and artifice! The spell
Lies in the sentiment! The steam of breath
That issues from the fountain of the soul
Involuntary, it is intellect—
By the heart warm'd, elated, soften'd, mellow'd!
Be curses on the *flowers* of poetry!
They are but idle, childish ornaments,
Or rather meretricious! The great soul
Disdains them. By an inward light impell'd,
It echoes forth the voice of spiritual truth,
Nor in material beauty seeks its praise.

To live amid the troubles of the world,
And learn no wisdom, is a life of scorn!
And not to glow amid the scenery
Of its stupendous beauty; and not to burn
With indignation at the crimes and follies
Of its half earth-born—half celestial habitants,
Beneath our better nature is to sink!

The majesty of high and daring thought,
The charm of a refined and melting bosom,
The force of piercing faculties of mind
Call forth the admiration of the enlighten'd,
The just and sound. To think, and meditate,
And rightly and unselfishly to judge,
And sympathize with human misery,
And mercy shew to man's unwilling frailties,—
But tear the veil from curs'd hypocrisy,
And meditated breach of faith, and robbery,
To hell's enduring torments to consign,
This, this becomes the Muse! She then her strain
Lifts as a lesson to direct the paths
Of straying mortals! With the daily tasks
And daily passions of mankind she deals;
And not a dreamy, mystic, sickly note
She pours, which girls in a factitious humour
May wonder at, and weep upon, in vain!

It is the sage's lore, that the ambition
Of manly genius only will aspire to;
What teaches us to muse with rectitude
Upon the events of ages gone away?
And by the aid of bright imagination
Revive the past, and bring the dead to life?
Once more before the judgment-seat array'd,
The Spirits of antiquity come forth;
And to the censure of succeeding times,
From transient passions free, their acts submit!

All wealth is in the mind;—without the mind
This scene of things is barren: 'tis the sentiment
And thought annex'd, that only gives it worth!
And thought without emotion is but empty,
Uncertain, and more subtle oft than wise!
Defend me from an idle play of words,
And glittering images, that tell no truth!
From metaphor, and simile, and dress,
Illustrative of what is stale and hollow!
We want the substance, not a worthless figure,
By gaudy and false ornaments disguised.

* And thus I close my dedicative lay,
For too prolix the several strains have been,—
So Fate ordains it. I have drank the cup
Of bitterness and wrong, e'en to its dregs!
But yet my head is sound, and spirits fail not.
And now let Calumny, or hell-scaping Scorn,
Fall full on me again, and fix their fangs
Upon my wounded heart; it still will beat
'Mid purer air, and with untamed emotions
Glow, and ascend on Fancy's wings to bask
On banks of waterfalls Elysian,
Beneath the fire of empyrean suns!

Then hail, ye glorious pair! in sympathy
Of virtue, as of genius, ever famed;—
And as in candour ye have breath'd of old
Your cheers to me, that charm'd away despair,
Bless me once more with your life-waking voices.
Thus, on the verge of SIXTY-NINE sad years,
I yet may fearlessly the lyre resound,
And on the tombs of mighty bards of yore
Sing hymns that shall their airy spirits soothe.†

* Friday, 30th September. † Friday morning, 30th Sept.—7, A.M.







